Asthma

Fact Sheet

What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs of children and adults. Asthma causes the airways in the lungs to swell and mucus to build up inside the air tubes for a short time. The airways get smaller or narrow which makes breathing harder. The narrow airways cause wheezing or a whistling sound in the chest when breathing. Asthma also causes difficulty breathing, chest tightness, and nighttime or early morning coughing.

How do you get asthma?

In most cases, we don't know what causes asthma. You are more likely to get asthma if you have family members with asthma and allergies. Even people without a family history of asthma get the disease. There are many things in the environment that can trigger an asthma attack.

What should I do if I have a family history of asthma?

Tell your doctor about your family history of asthma. The doctor will probably want to examine you or your children. Your doctor may ask questions and do some breathing tests to see if you or your children have asthma. If you and your children don't have asthma now, the doctor can tell you how to delay or prevent asthma symptoms.

What things cause or trigger an asthma attack?

Sudden wheezing and problems breathing, called an asthma attack, can be caused by:

- Smoking cigarettes, cigars, or a pipe
- Second hand smoke
- Dust mites and cockroaches
- Air pollution, fumes, or a sudden change in temperature
- Pollen, mold, foods, or pet dander
- A cold or the flu
- Too much activity, especially if the air is cold and dry

Asthma

Can asthma symptoms be prevented?

We don't yet know how to prevent the disease asthma, but there are some things you can do to lower your chances of having an asthma attack. To prevent asthma symptoms:

- Stop smoking if you smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Learn about your asthma and follow your asthma self-management plan.
- Get regular checkups and use medicines as directed by your doctor to prevent or stop attacks.
- Avoid things (triggers) that make your asthma worse.
- Take the flu vaccine every year and the pneumonia vaccine every 5 years.
- Lose weight if you are overweight and get regular exercise. If exercise brings on your asthma symptoms, talk to your doctor about the best ways to control your asthma when you are active.

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

For more information about asthma:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  www.cdc.gov/asthma/faqs.htm
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
  www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Asthma/Asthma_All.html
- American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology
  www.aaaai.org/patients/topicofthemonth/0107/

Breast Cancer

Fact Sheet

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is cancer that forms in the tissues of the breast. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, but men can also get breast cancer. Over the course of her lifetime, one in eight women will be found to have breast cancer. Screening for breast cancer is very important, because some women do not have symptoms of breast cancer. If symptoms occur, they may include:

- a lump in the breast that is firm to touch
- a change in size or shape of the breast
- liquid coming from a nipple
- a lump in the armpit
- a change in the color or feel of the skin of the breast or nipple

What are the risk factors for breast cancer?

- Family history of breast cancer
- Women who started their period before age 12 or menopause after age 55
- Over 50 years old
- Women who have had no children or had their first child after age 30
- Being overweight or obese
- Not getting enough exercise
- Drinking more than one alcoholic drink a day
- Taking a medicine of estrogen and progesterone to help with symptoms from the change of life (menopause)

How can I lower my risk for breast cancer?

- Eat a low fat, high fiber diet. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats in your diet.
- Keep a healthy weight for your height
- Exercise for 30 minutes a day
- Have only one drink with alcohol a day

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

For more information about breast cancer:

- Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation www.komen.org
- National Cancer Institute http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/breast

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http://www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/FamilyHistoryProject.htm

Colon Cancer

Fact Sheet

What is colon cancer?

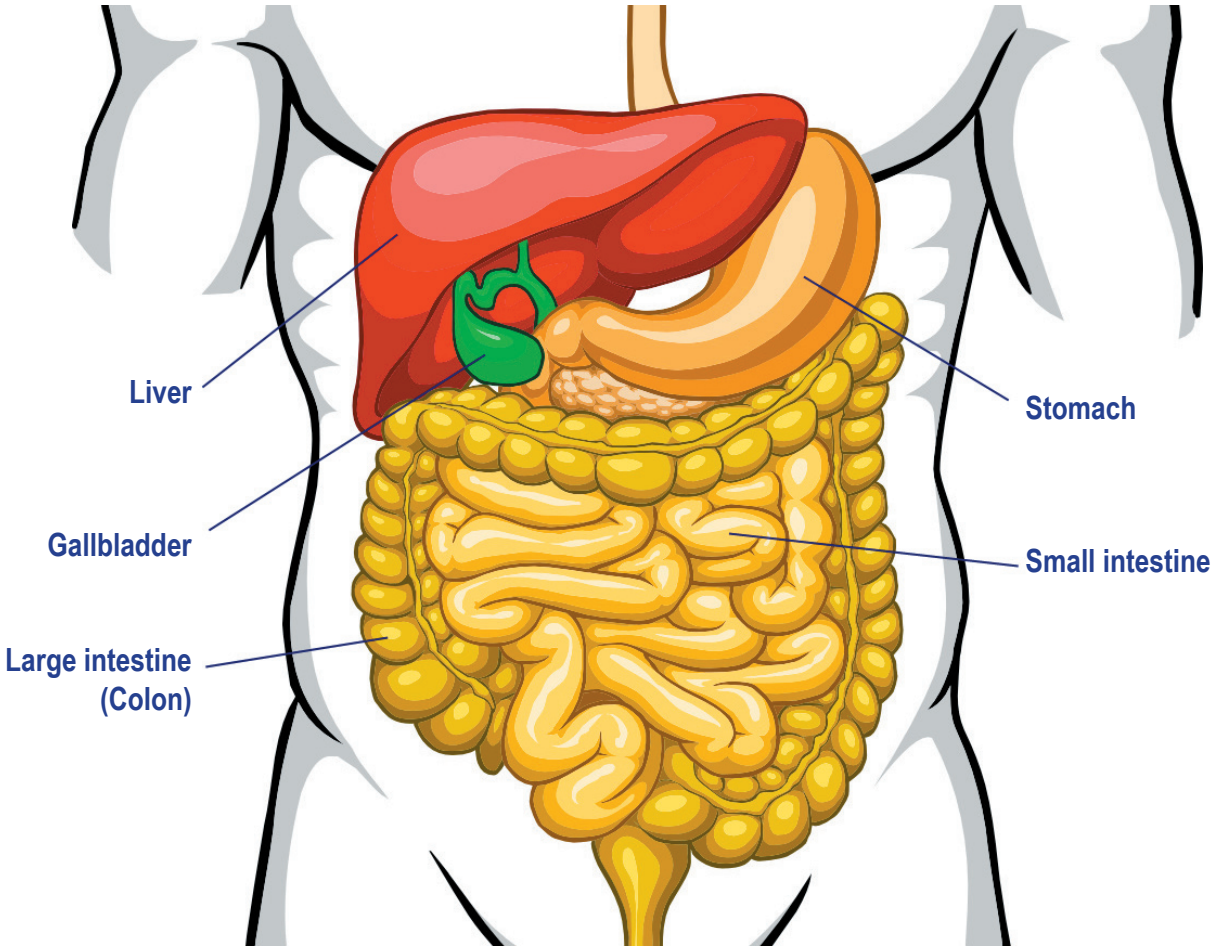
Colon cancer is cancer that forms in the longest part of the large bowel, called the colon. Tumors or growths in the colon are called polyps. Not all polyps are cancer. If colon cancer is found early, it is often curable. It is the third most common cancer in women and men.

The most common sign of colon cancer is a change in normal bowel habits, however, some people do not have any symptoms. Some symptoms include:

- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Bright red or very dark blood in your bowel movements
- Losing weight with no known cause

What are the risk factors for colon cancer?

- Family or personal history of colon cancer
- Over 50 years old
- History of tumors in your colon



Colon Cancer

- Diseases in your intestines
- Smoking
- High fat, low fiber diet
- Being overweight or obese
- Not getting enough exercise
- Drinking many alcoholic drinks a day

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

How can I lower my risk for colon cancer?

- Talk to your doctor about getting a screening test called a colonoscopy starting at age 50. This test will find problems in the bowel. If you have polyps, they will be removed and tested for cancer. If you have a family history of colon cancer, you should start getting the test at an earlier age.
- Eat a low fat, high fiber diet. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats in your diet.
- Do not smoke.
- Exercise for 30 minutes a day.
- Keep a healthy weight for your height.
- Have only one drink with alcohol a day.

For more information about colon cancer:

- The National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/colon-and-rectal
- National Institutes of Health www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/colorectalcancer.html
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/

Depression

Fact Sheet

What is depression?

Depression is a disorder that affects your body, moods, behaviors, and thoughts. It can change the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. Everyone feels depressed at times and this is normal. When depressed feelings last for more than a month, interferes with going to school or work, and causes problems being with others, then it is an illness.

Check off any signs listed below that you have had for 4 weeks or more. You may have major depression if you have 5 or more of these signs, including one of the first two signs (➔) listed. If these signs last for at least 2 weeks, see your doctor for a diagnosis and treatment.

- ➔ ☐ Loss of interest and pleasure in things you used to enjoy, including sex
- ➔ ☐ Feeling sad, blue, or down in the dumps. Crying a lot
- ☐ Feeling slowed down or restless and unable to sit still
- ☐ Feeling hopeless and helpless
- ☐ Feeling tired
- ☐ Feeling irritable and upset
- ☐ Feeling anxious or worried
- ☐ Changes in appetite with weight loss or gain
- ☐ Changes in sleep, such as you can't get to sleep or you sleep too much
- ☐ Thoughts of death or wanting to harm yourself
- ☐ Withdrawing from others
- ☐ Physical problems like headaches, stomach aches, backaches

What are the risk factors for major depression?

Depression is usually caused by a number of factors:

Physical factors:

- Changes in the makeup of the brain
- Medicines like steroids and some blood pressure medicine
- Illness that results in major changes in your life
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Stress

Depression

- **Genetic factors:**
  - Depression often runs in families. It is helpful to know if a blood relative has had major depression because what helped one family member may work to treat another.
- **Environmental factors:**
  - Living with violence, neglect, abuse, or poverty
  - Major change in your life, such as loss of a job, death of someone close to you, financial or legal problems, or divorce

How can I lower my risk for major depression?

- Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history of depression. Ask about ways to deal with depression. Call immediately if you have suicidal thoughts.
- Get regular screenings by a health care provider if you have a family history.

- Stay active, even if you don't feel like it.
- Drink less alcohol and don't use drugs.

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

- Learn how to reduce your stress.
- Try not to be alone.
- Share your feelings with others.
- Don't make major decisions about your life when feeling depressed.

For more information about depression:

- The National Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm
- The American Academy of Family Physicians www.familydoctor.org

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Stroke

Fact Sheet

What is stroke?

A stroke occurs when blood flow to a certain part of the brain is suddenly blocked or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. When this happens, the brain does not get the oxygen and nutrients it needs and damage to the brain results. Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States. People who don't die from a stroke can have a lot of problems such as not being able to move part of their body, as well as speech and emotional changes. If stroke is treated within 3 hours, the risk of death and being disabled can be less.

Stroke symptoms appear suddenly, and often there is more than one symptom at the same time. Some major symptoms include:

- numbness or weakness of the face, arms, or legs
- confusion or trouble speaking or understanding others
- trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- trouble walking or loss of balance
- severe headache

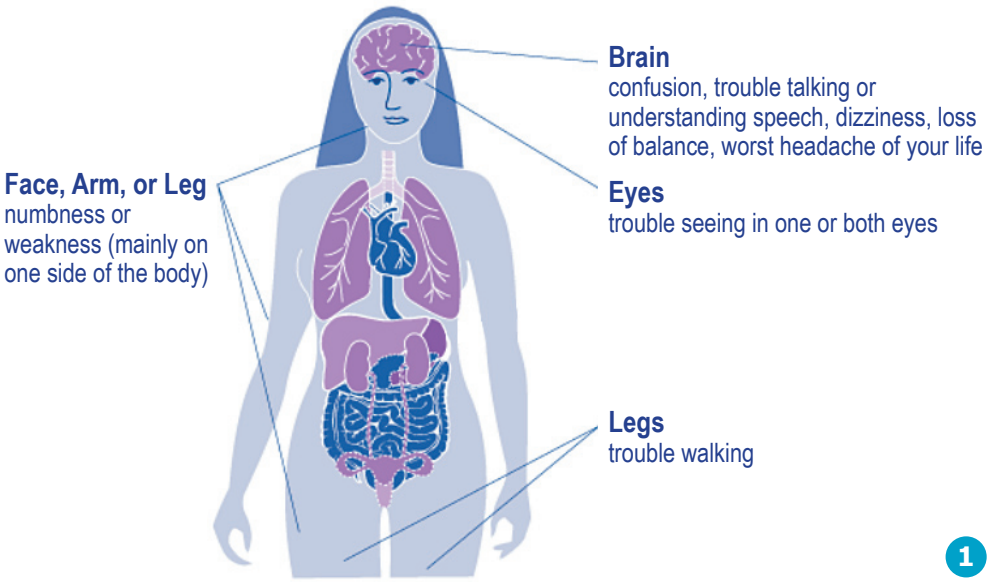
What are the risk factors for stroke?

Stroke is usually caused by a number of factors. The more risk factors one has, the greater the chance for having a stroke. Some risk factors cannot be changed or controlled, while other risk factors can be controlled.

Risk factors you can control:

- ☐ High blood pressure (140/90 or above) is the most important risk factor
- ☐ Smoking or drinking more than 1 alcoholic drink a day
- ☐ Obesity
- ☐ Diabetes or heart disease
- ☐ Diet high in fat, calories, and cholesterol
- ☐ Lack of exercise

Signs of a Stroke



Stroke

Risk factors you cannot control:

- ☐ Family history
- ☐ Over 55 years of age
- ☐ Men are more likely than women to have a stroke
- ☐ Previous stroke or 'mini-stroke. Mini-strokes are when a person has stroke-like symptoms for no longer than 24 hours then all the symptoms disappear.
- ☐ Being African American

How can I lower my risk for having a stroke?

- Talk to your healthcare provider about screening tests for a stroke. Ask about what you can do to decrease your risk for having a stroke.

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

- Stop smoking
- Do not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink a day.

- Get your blood pressure checked regularly.
- Keep a healthy weight by eating a well balanced diet. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats in your diet.
- Cut back on foods high in cholesterol.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise every day.

For more information about stroke:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Stroke
  www.cdc.gov/stroke
- American Stroke Association
  www.strokeassociation.org

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Ovarian Cancer

Fact Sheet

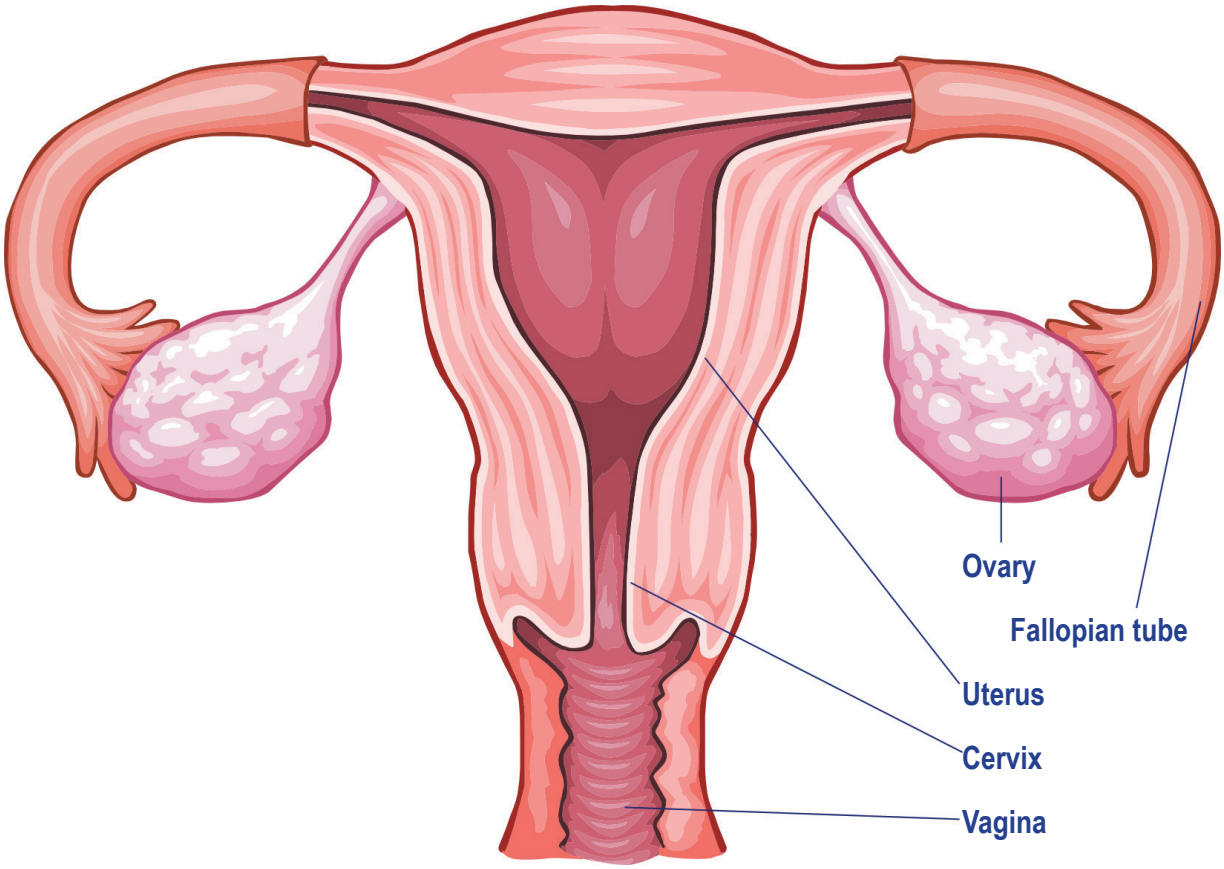
What is ovarian cancer?

Ovarian cancer is cancer that forms in the tissues of the ovary. The ovaries are the female sex organs that produce eggs. Ovarian cancer is the seventh most common cancer and the fifth leading cause of cancer death in women. Ovarian cancer symptoms can be hard to recognize and some women may not have symptoms. Your yearly PAP tests do not find ovarian cancer. If symptoms occur, they may include:

- Bloating or feeling full
- Pain in the area below your stomach (pelvic pain)
- Back pain
- Stomach discomfort or gas
- Having to pass urine very badly or often
- Discharge from your vagina that is not normal for you
- Feeling tired all the time

What are the risk factors for ovarian cancer?

- Family history of ovarian cancer



Ovarian Cancer

- Personal history of breast, uterine, or colon cancer
- Over 50 years old, but it can occur in younger women
- Being overweight or obese
- Use of hormone or fertility drugs
- Women who have had no children

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

How can I lower my risk for ovarian cancer?

- Eat a low fat, high fiber diet. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats in your diet
- Exercise for 30 minutes a day
- Keep a healthy weight for your height

Other things that may lower your chance of getting ovarian cancer:

- Taking birth control pills for more than five years
- Getting your tubes tied
- Having a hysterectomy or both ovaries removed
- Having children

For more information about ovarian cancer:

- The National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/ovarian
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/cancer/ovarian/basic_info/

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Diabetes

Fact Sheet

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a serious disease where your body is not able to use the foods you eat for energy. Your body normally breaks down most of the foods you eat into a form of energy called glucose. Glucose is a type of sugar. A hormone called insulin is needed to move the sugar from your blood into your body's cells, where it is used to make energy. Insulin in the body is made by the pancreas. A person cannot live without insulin.

Diabetes occurs when the body:

- Does not make insulin at all
- Does not make enough insulin
- Does not use the insulin that it makes

Diabetes, therefore, leaves extra sugar in the blood.

There are two types of diabetes

- Type-1 diabetes happens when the body does not make any insulin. Usually, type-1 diabetes occurs in children or young adults.
- Type-2 diabetes occurs when the body does not make enough insulin or the body is not able to use the insulin it makes. People are usually older when they find out that they have type-2 diabetes. It is becoming more common in teen-agers who are obese.

Diabetes causes many health problems, including blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, and can lead to leg amputations.

Who is most likely to get diabetes?

Diabetes often runs in families, so people with blood relatives who have diabetes are more likely to also get diabetes. Type-2 diabetes runs in families more than type-1 diabetes.

What are the risk factors for type-2 diabetes?

- Family history of type-2 diabetes
- Being overweight or inactive
- High blood pressure
- High levels of triglycerides in the blood or low levels of "good cholesterol" (HDL) in the blood
- Over 40 years old
- Diabetes during pregnancy or giving birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds

Diabetes

- African American, Native American, Hispanic, or Asian-Pacific Islander background

How can I lower my risk for diabetes?

- Know your family history and talk with your doctor. Ask about other risk factors for diabetes and ways you can reduce your risk.
- Eat a healthy diet, including fruits, vegetables, grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean meat. Limit foods high in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol and sugar, including drinks.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Get active, such as taking brisk walks, for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Exercise helps you keep a healthy weight and helps your cells use insulin.

- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink each day.
- If you are pregnant, see your doctor regularly.

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

For more information about diabetes:

- American Diabetes Association
  www.diabetes.org
- National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse
  http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/

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Heart Disease

Fact Sheet

What is heart disease?

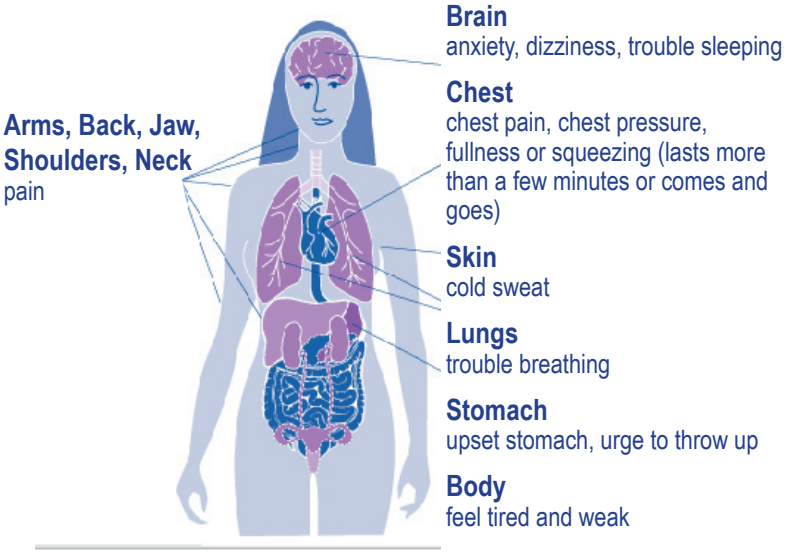
Heart disease is a term that includes several heart conditions. The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack. Your heart muscle needs oxygen to survive. Blood with oxygen is carried to the heart muscle in blood vessels called coronary arteries. A buildup of fat and cholesterol, called plaque, can occur in the blood vessels. If plaque breaks, a blood clot forms. The blood clot can block the artery and shut off the flow of blood and oxygen to the heart muscle. A heart attack occurs when the heart muscle starves from lack of blood flow and dies. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women.

Heart disease takes many years to develop, and there are often no signs until a heart attack occurs. The most common symptom of a heart attack is chest pain or an intense pressure or squeezing in the chest that lasts more than a few minutes.

Other symptoms are:

- discomfort or pain in the upper parts of the body, such as the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach
- breathing problems
- being sick to your stomach or nauseous

Signs of a Heart Attack



- feeling faint or woozy
- breaking out in a cold sweat.

What are the risk factors for heart disease?

Heart disease is usually caused by a number of factors. The more risk factors one has, the greater the chance for disease. Some risk factors cannot be changed or controlled, while other risk factors are controllable.

Risk factors you can control:

- ☐ Smoking
- ☐ Drinking more than 1 alcoholic drink a day
- ☐ Obesity
- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Diet high in fat, calories and cholesterol

Heart Disease

- ☐ High blood pressure of 140/90 or above
- ☐ Stress

- **Risk factors you cannot control:**
  - ☐ Family history
  - ☐ Women over 65 and men over 50

How can I lower my risk for heart disease?

- Know your family history and talk to your healthcare provider about screening tests for heart disease. Ask about what you can do to prevent heart disease.
- Stop smoking and do not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink a day.
- Keep a healthy weight by eating a

well balanced diet. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and lean meats in your diet.

- Cut back on foods high in cholesterol and salt. Try to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day and 2,300 mg of salt each day.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise every day.
- Do not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink a day.
- Get your blood pressure checked regularly.
- Manage stress in a healthy way.

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

For more information about heart disease:

- American Health Association
  www.americanheart.org
- American Heart Association's Go Red for Women
  www.goredforwomen.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/

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Lung Cancer

Fact Sheet

What is lung cancer?

Lung cancer is cancer that forms in the tissues of the lungs. It is the second most common cancer and the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women. Some people do not have any symptoms at all. If symptoms are present, they may include:

- coughing that does not go away
- problems getting your breath
- weight loss
- coughing up blood
- chest pain
- fever

What are the risk factors for lung cancer?

- Smoking
- Secondhand smoke
- Family history of lung cancer
- Breathing in certain chemicals (asbestos or radioactive gases)
- Age

How can I lower my risk for lung cancer?

- Stop smoking
- Avoid secondhand smoke

- Make your home or workplace safer by testing for radioactive gases and asbestos
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

For more information about lung cancer:

- The National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/lung
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic_info/risk_factors.htm

For more information about quitting smoking:

- Smokefree.gov
- 1-800-Quit-Now http://1800quitnow.cancer.gov/

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http://www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/FamilyHistoryProject.htm

Family History is important to your health

Most of us know that we can lower our chance of getting a disease by eating healthy foods, getting enough exercise, and not smoking. But did you know that your family health history might be one of the best ways to find out if you are at risk for getting heart disease, stroke, diabetes, or cancer? If you know your family history, it can help you lower your risk of having health problems.

Family History and Your Risk of Disease

Family members share their genes, as well as routines and habits. Everyone can see traits that run in their family, such as curly hair or dimples. Risks for diseases such as asthma, cancer, and heart disease also run in families.

No one's family history of disease is the same. Some features of a family history that may raise a person's risk are:

- Diseases that occur at a younger age than expected (10-20 years before most people get the disease)
- Disease in more than one blood relative
- Disease that does not usually affect a certain sex (such as breast cancer in a man)
- Certain combinations of diseases within a family (such as breast cancer and cancer of the ovaries, or heart disease and diabetes)

Using Family History to Improve your Health

People with a family history of disease may have the most to gain from lifestyle changes and screening tests. You can't change your genes. You can change unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, being inactive, and poor eating habits. Living a healthy lifestyle can reduce your risk for diseases that run in your family.

Screening tests (such as a mammogram) can find diseases like cancers at an early stage when they are the most able to be treated. Screening tests can also find disease risk factors like high cholesterol and high blood pressure, which can be treated to reduce the chances of getting diseases.

Learning About Your Family Health History

To learn about your family health history:

- ask questions and talk at family events
- look at death certificates and old medical records, if possible.

Collect information from your blood relatives, including grandparents, parents, siblings, and children.

Family History

Ask about:

- major medical conditions and causes of death,
- age the disease began,
- age of death,
- ethnic background.

Write down the facts and share it with your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider will do the following:

- review your disease-risk based on your family history and other risk factors,
- suggest life changes to help prevent disease,
- set up screening tests to detect disease early.

Your health provider may find a pattern of disease in your family. This could be a sign of a disease that is passed on from parent to child. Your healthcare provider may send you to an expert who can help decide if you have an inherited form of disease. If you do have an inherited disease, steps can be made to lower your risk.

What If You Have No Family Health History?

Even if you don't have a family history of health problems, you could still be at risk. This is because:

- your way of life, personal health history, and other factors also increase your chances of getting a disease.
- you may be unaware of disease in some family members.
- you could have family members who died young, before they had a chance to develop problems such as cancer, heart disease, or stroke.

Being aware of your family health history is a vital part of a lifelong wellness plan.

Don't wait for symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about your family health history. Find out what you can do to reduce your risk of disease or detect it early.

Where You Can Find More Information

The following websites provide additional information on family health history:

- U.S. Surgeon General's Family History Initiative
  www.hhs.gov/familyhistory
- CDC's Family History Web site for the Public
  www.cdc.gov/genomics/public/famhist.htm

Modified from "Family History is Important For Your Health." Available at http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/docs/EnglishFactSheet.pdf.
Funded by the National Human Genome Research Institute/NIH — Developed by the Cincinnati Family History Working Group, 2007
http://www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/FamilyHistoryProject.htm

Family Health History

What is family health history?

Family health history is a collection of information about health conditions that "run in your family." It includes the eating habits, behaviors, and environment that your family shares. If you know about health conditions that run in your family, it can help you and your family make healthy choices.

What do families share in common?

You share many things with your family. Relatives pass on culture and values with photos, recipes, stories, religion, and music. You may share some of the same habits, such as smoking or exercising. Relatives also pass on certain traits, such as how tall you are and your eye color.

Genes are passed on to you from your parents. Your genes have information about how your body works. Some genes can raise your chance of getting certain diseases. When members of your family share health problems, you might be at risk for getting the same health problems some day. This is because families share genes, habits, diet, and environment. These factors may influence how healthy we are later on in life. You may be able to prevent illness by being aware of your family health history and by making healthy choices.

Carla's Story:

"My grandmother died of a heart attack when she was 60. My father died of a heart attack when he was 50. A few years ago I told my doctor at the clinic about our family health history. My doctor did some tests and found out that I was at risk for heart disease. Maybe even a heart attack. He put me on medicine to lower my risk and told me to stop eating so many fried foods."

How can my choices affect my health?

Many things shape your health. Some things – such as your genes – are not in your control. Other things - such as what you eat, if you smoke, if you exercise, and what you do for a living – are choices that can shape your health. To make healthy choices, you need to know about your health at this time, your risk for getting diseases, and your environment.

How can my choices affect my children's health?

If you help your children make healthy choices now, they will be more likely to make healthy choices when they are adults. You cannot control what genes

Family Health History

you pass on to your children. You can promote healthy habits in your children to help reduce their risk of disease.

What healthy choices can I make for me and my family?

- Keep a healthy weight
- Exercise most days
- Limit fat in your diet
- Eat fruits and vegetables every day
- Don't smoke
- Limit alcohol to one drink a day

Kathy's Story:

"I know diabetes runs in my family. My dad had diabetes and my aunt died from complications of diabetes. So I know some of the things I need to watch and look out for. I'm careful for my kids too. We eat lots of fruits and vegetables and try to stay active."

What relatives should I include in my family health history?

Collect information about your blood relatives, including:

- Yourself
- Your parents
- Your brothers and sisters
- Your children
- Your grandparents
- Your half-brothers and half-sisters
- Your aunts and uncles
- Your nieces and nephews
- Your cousins.

What information should I collect?

- Name and relationship to you (half-sister, child, etc)
- Ethnic background, race, and origins of family
- Date of birth (or your best guess – for example, "1940s")
- Major medical problems
- If a person has died, their age and cause of death

Tips for collecting a family health history

Your relatives are the best source of information about your family. Start with your parents if they are still living. They may refer you to the "family historian."

Family Health History

Often, older relatives are good sources of information.

When you talk with your relatives, it is important to respect others. Some relatives may not want to share their medical histories. Some may not know their family health history.

If you are adopted, you may be able to learn some of your family health history through your adoptive parents. You may also ask to see the adoption agency records.

Laura's Story:

"Since I am adopted, I thought there was no way for me to put together a family health history. Even though my adopted family and the adoption agency tried to help, they didn't have the answers about my birth family's health I needed. So I started my family health history with me. I developed asthma as a young child and started wearing glasses when I was 12 years old. I will pass the information on to my children, and they will be able to add to our family history.

What should I do with my family health history?

- Save and update your family health history with new information you learn about your family
- Find out more about diseases that run in your family
- Learn how to stay healthy
- Share information with your family
- Take a review of your health history to your health provider

How can knowing my family health history help me stay healthy?

Family health history gives you a hint of which diseases run in your family. Health problems that develop at an age that is younger than most can be a clue that your family has higher risks. You can't change your genes, but you can change your behavior.

Knowing your family health history will help you:

- Recognize risks due to shared genes
- Understand what lifestyle and environmental factors you share with your family
- Talk to your family about your health

Family Health History

- Talk to your health care provider about your family history

Why should I take my Family Health History to my healthcare provider?

Your healthcare provider may use your family health history and current health to figure out your risk for developing a disease. Your provider can help decide what screenings you should get and what medicines you might take. Your doctor may also advise lifestyle changes to help prevent disease.

Based on your family health history, a healthcare provider may order a genetic test or have you go to a genetics specialist. A specific test may show if you are affected or at risk for a disease. It can also show if the disease can be passed on to your children.

Your healthcare provider can help you:

- Understand the results of your tests
- Learn of any treatments for a disease found by the test
- Understand how healthy lifestyle choices can reduce your risk and your children's risk of developing a disease

Vanessa's Story:

As I gather family history, I am finding out that cancer runs in the family. But they are all different kinds of cancer so I don't know if this is a pattern or not.

My aunt- my mom's sister-had breast cancer and died. My dad's grandmother had stomach cancer and died. My dad had colon cancer and lived.

Remember:

- Share your family health history with your healthcare provider
- Ask if there are screening tests for a disease in your family
- Find out what you can do to reduce your risk and your children's risk of developing disease

Adapted from "A Guide to Family Health History" and "A Guide for Understanding Genetics and Health" www.geneticalliance.org

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http://www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/FamilyHistoryProject.htm